Government of Saskatchewan

Annual Report

Northern Affairs Secretariat

April 1, 1990 - December 31, 1990

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Honourable Carol Carson
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan
Community Services

Minister's Letter of Transmittal

The Honourable Sylvia Fedoruk, O.C., S.O.M.
Lieutenant Governor
Province of Saskatchewan

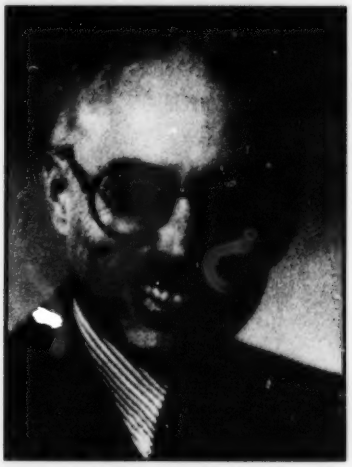
Madam:

I have the honour of submitting the annual report of the Saskatchewan Northern Affairs Secretariat for the period April 1, 1990 to December 31, 1990.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Carson

Carol Carson
Minister
Saskatchewan
Community Services



Dave M. Innes
Deputy Minister
Saskatchewan
Community Services

Deputy Minister's Letter of Transmittal

The Honourable Carol Carson,
Minister, Saskatchewan
Community Services

Madam:

I have the honour of submitting the annual report of the Saskatchewan Northern Affairs Secretariat for the period April 1, 1990 to December 31, 1990.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave M. Innes
Deputy Minister
Saskatchewan
Community Services

Foreword

The Northern Affairs Secretariat works with northern community leaders, industry and government on a broad range of issues and policy initiatives associated with the development of northern Saskatchewan.

In January, 1991 as part of a government reorganization, the Secretariat was transferred to the newly created Community Services Department and became the Northern Development and Planning Services Branch.

In the nine months ending December 31, 1990, significant northern resource development was realized:

- Two new gold mines were established and several uranium operations were expanded.
- A record 2.5 million pounds of wild rice was harvested, much of it processed in the north, and sold world wide.
- Forest industry growth in Meadow Lake holds promise for sustainable business and employment opportunities on the west side.
- A five hundred kilometre transmission line was constructed through east central regions to provide secure affordable electric power to northern people and industrial customers.

Working in concert with northerners, and with the support of industry and many government agencies, substantial benefits were achieved for northerners from these developments.

Northern Mineral Development

Staff coordinate the negotiation of Surface Lease Agreements with northern mineral developers on behalf of government. A variety of regulatory and developmental agencies contribute to the final preparation of each agreement, ensuring that development proceeds in a manner sensitive to the needs of the public and industry.

Four new agreements were prepared between April 1 and December 31, 1990; two for expansion of the Rabbit Lake uranium operation, and two for new gold mines in the Brabant Lake area.

Staff were also involved in the establishment of a framework for a major public inquiry into northern uranium development. Expected to begin in late 1991, the inquiry will take 18 to 24 months to complete. Findings of the Board of Inquiry will be reflected in federal and provincial regulation of the Saskatchewan uranium industry.

West Side Forestry Development

Along with the sale of the Meadow Lake and Green Lake sawmills, and bolstered by construction of a major pulp mill by Millar Western, the forest industry is becoming an important cornerstone for regional economic development on the west side. With assistance from Secretariat staff a regional corporate approach is being planned by the North West Saskatchewan Municipalities Association to undertake forestry related work.

While initial emphasis will be on forest harvesting contracts, future business and a significant number of new employment opportunities will arise in transportation, silviculture and value added processing.

Transportation and Utilities

- During the winter and spring of 1990 the La Loche road was extended to the Garson River, 30 kilometres east of the Alberta border.
  The La Loche road project is a locally initiated construction project, whereby several departments collaborate to provide funding, equipment and training to people from La Loche to build a road to the Alberta border. The road will ultimately open northwestern Saskatchewan to new tourism and economic development opportunities. People from northwestern Saskatchewan will have opportunities for employment and more accessible medical and educational facilities in Fort McMurray.

- During the summer and early fall of 1990, SaskPower completed brush clearing on a 500 kilometre hydro electric transmission line stretching from Island Falls to Points North.

  Staff worked with SaskPower, and other government officials to coordinate support services including training, financing and administrative assistance allowing the entire project to be undertaken by ten northern contractors, creating about 8,000 person days of employment.

  The $70 million new transmission line, to be energized in November, 1991, will link with and strengthen the Athabasca transmission line providing reliable power for both commercial and residential development in central and eastern regions of the north.

- Toward year end, staff also began participating in an interdepartmental forum, with representation from northern Indian bands, to discuss transportation requirements in the Athabasca region. High on the priority list is the desire for a road link to the south to complement existing air and barge services.

Cumberland House Development Agreement

The Northern Affairs Secretariat continued to represent the provincial government on the Cumberland House Development Corporation Board and to administer the Cumberland House Development Agreement on behalf of the province. Staff provided advice and assistance to the Development Corporation throughout the year and worked closely with corporation officials in setting up Cumberland House Agro Enterprise, Inc. - a separate company that will be responsible for managing and leading the diversification of existing farm operations at Cumberland House.

As well, government has undertaken a review of the Development Corporation's first land transfer request under the Development Agreement.

New Developments

Staff played key roles in helping two very different northern based organizations to address locally identified issues of social and economic importance:

- Working with the La Ronge Museum Board, the Northern Recreation Coordinating Committee, and the Northwest Tourism Development Association, the corporation Heritage North was founded to investigate and promote tourism based on northern heritage resources.

  Following a summer of extensive community consultations, Heritage North sponsored the first northern heritage tourism conference in La Ronge, bringing local interests together with resource people and agencies from across Saskatchewan. Seeds were sown for future community development.

- Staff had similar involvement with The Gary Tinker Foundation, established to create awareness of the needs of northern people with disabilities. Activities included setting up a resource centre and contact office in Pinehouse and organizing a major conference at Northern Lights Lodge on Deschambault Lake.

Northern Advocacy

The Secretariat plays an important role in bringing a northern perspective to many different government and industry forums dealing with policy and program development. Staff are actively involved in a variety of promotional and communications activities as well as participating on standing committees dealing with issues ranging from environmental impact to wild rice.

Participation in a national study into native involvement in the mineral industry, in committees advising the Saskatchewan Round Table on the Environment, and in organizing the northern portion of the Governor General's Canadian Study Conference served to raise northern issues and priorities with influential organizations.

Toward year end, staff were heavily involved in planning a Task Force on northern economic development, to become operational in the spring, 1991. The Task Force will solicit direct input from northerners on issues including resource based revenues and organizing for economic development.

The Year in Review

April

The province announced a new policy prohibiting mineral development in provincial parks, with the exception of designated areas within Lac La Ronge Provincial Park. The exception accommodated existing mineral claims in an area where mineral development occurred before park boundaries were established. The policy was described as a reasonable balance between the government's priority to provide environmental protection for parklands and its duty to honour past commitments for mineral development in the province.

May

Cameco, the world's largest uranium mining company, was charged with violating the provincial *Environmental Management and Protection Act* as a result of a spill of contaminated water in northern Saskatchewan. The Hatchet Lake Band's request for a public inquiry to evaluate the impact of uranium mining in the north received public support.

June

The SaskPower Northern Enterprise Fund successfully completed its first year of operations and was instrumental in helping northerners to start and expand businesses. The Fund receives revenues from the production of electricity at SaskPower's northern hydro sites. Managed by a ten member northern board, the Fund provides loans, grants, loan guarantees, and assumes equity positions. Ten per cent of the Fund is set aside for university and institute scholarships awarded annually to northern students.

July

Metis Society president Jim Durocher was appointed to the three member Green Lake Board of Trustees to manage funds and assets resulting from the sale of the provincially owned Central Farm. The Green Lake Trust was established to foster local economic development, and to allow matters related to land ownership and future development to be resolved at the local level by the Board of Trustees and the Village of Green Lake.

August

The Gary Tinker Foundation hosted the first ever conference for northern people with disabilities at Northern Lights Lodge at Deschambault Lake. The Foundation was established by twenty-two year old Gary Tinker, a northerner who despite his disability walked 650 kilometres on crutches to raise awareness of the special problems facing northern people with disabilities. The conference was successful in bringing disabled northerners together to identify common concerns and to set goals and objectives for dealing with the issues. Government representatives in attendance made commitments to assist disabled people in the north to achieve their objectives.

September

The NorthWest Credit Union, Buffalo Narrows (the first new credit union in Saskatchewan in 18 years and the first bank in northwestern Saskatchewan) received its charter. Local residents and businesses from several surrounding communities raised $125,000 in equity to start the new credit union. The new banking facility will play a key role in the economic growth and diversification of the region.

October

Saskatchewan's first Heritage Tourism Conference which focused on the north was held in La Ronge, bringing interested northerners together with resource people from across the province. Participants were treated to a living display of northern heritage provided by local artisans and artists, in keeping with the conference theme of "Bringing Our Heritage to Life."

November

Mistik Management, a subsidiary of Millar Western Meadow Lake Pulp Ltd. and Nor Sask Forest Products (40 per cent owned by the Meadow Lake District Chiefs) offered to contract 50 per cent of its harvesting and reforestation activities in the Vermette Block to Indian bands in northwestern Saskatchewan and 50 per cent to the Metis member communities in the NorthWest Saskatchewan Municipalities Association.

Mistik estimates that it will require 300,000 m^3 of softwood and up to 700,000 m^3 of hardwood from the Forest Management Licence Agreement (FMLA) area within five years. Opportunities for road construction, cutting and hauling and a variety of silviculture activities will exist. It is anticipated that over 200 new forestry jobs will be created in the Meadow Lake-northwestern Saskatchewan area.

December

The province announced a $15 million capitalization plan for the Indian Heritage Trust Fund. The Fund's base includes a combination of Saskoil and Potash Corporation shares. Through acquisition of bonds and shares, Indian Bands will be able to funnel the revenue into their communities for economic development. The Minister of the Indian and Native Affairs Secretariat told delegates at an Indian Economic Development Conference that the Fund represents a significant boost to Indian bands in their efforts toward economic self sufficiency and social prosperity.